

Standing Strong by God's Spirit

Acts 23:1-5

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 3-29-2009

Introduction

This past week I was reading the testimony of Karen Myers down in Kansas. Her mother was the co-founder of Right to Life of Kansas, so ever since Karen was six years old she was out picketing and praying at abortion clinics and other abortion venues. And their focus has especially been on offering help. Her mother, who was a survivor of the Holocaust in Germany, said that if Christians remain silent about abortion, this nation would gradually take on a Nazi-like attitude toward everyone and everything. Many Christians have no idea how bad things are because they are safe in their homes and aren't interacting with our culture. But Karen who was on the front lines of the battle has experienced incredible abuse at the hands of authorities. It all started at the Coliseum when she was part of a peaceful line at a Cher concert offering help to post-abortion trauma women. She had a poster that read, "Hurting after abortion? Call 1-800-401-6494." That was the number for a post-abortion trauma-counseling center.

A deputy came along and shouted for everyone to move back 100 feet, and then without warning before anyone could even move Karen felt her arms twisted twice into a double hammerlock. As he jerked her back and forth she felt like her arms were being torn off. She was just a slight little thing. She begged him to stop hurting her, and then she was slammed into the ground with him pushing his full weight into her small-framed body, smashing her face into the dirt. She felt fiery hot sensations ran up and down her shoulders and she knew she was injured. As it turns out, she would need therapy for many months to regain some use of her arms. This was just the beginning of many indignities Karen would receive at the hands of police, guards and courts. And some of it is even more horrible than what I have shared with you – especially in jail. We are going to be talking about Ananias, a man who used thugs in just this way on Jews that he didn't like. Acts is an incredibly relevant book.

Well, anyway, Karen's case is just one of hundreds of cases that I have seen in the good ol' USA in which peaceful protestors have had concussions, broken arms, broken facial bones, permanently damaged nerves, and internal injuries from overly aggressive police. In fact, some of

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the police I have watched on video have made it quite clear that they intended to break bones. I watched a video of police in LA arresting Operation Rescue proliferators, and on that video I saw several arms snapped. You could hear the snap as one man who had the nunchukus applied to his arm had his arm just flop over. Another man who was in a crawling position, was told to put his arms up, and when he went from a crawling to a kneeling position with his arms up the police officer can be seen kicking him in the face or upper chest (it's hard to see), but kicking him so hard that he went flying back. You would expect this in some countries, but this video shows police in our country punishing protestors, not simply carrying them off. If you want to watch a movie that will spoil your whole week, watch one of those videos. Incredible abuses have been perpetrated in Atlanta, Los Angeles, West Hartford and other places. We have seen the book of Acts is very relevant for our own age (unless of course you stay home all day and aren't on the front lines of the battle). Last week we looked at the injustice of mobs and the injustice of civic officers. Now we are coming face to face with the depravity of the courts. And anybody who has been in the prolife movement knows about the depravity of the courts.

I. Paul's Confident, Spirit-filled testimony (v. 1)

And the first thing that I want you to notice is the confident, Spirit-filled testimony that Paul gives to this court. **“Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’”** In his pre-Christ days Paul was on the Sanhedrin and he knew the rules of procedure. So he dives in. There is nothing wrong with his immediate assertion of his innocence. I want you to notice two things:

First, Paul declares himself not guilty of anything related to this court. Before God his conscience was clear of any charges that were brought to the floor. This means that Paul is throwing the burden of proof upon the court. According to Jewish law he doesn't have to prove anything. He just enters a not-guilty plea. Apparently Ananias doesn't like that – and there are agencies in the Federal Government today that assume you are guilty until you can prove your innocence. And they get frustrated when you don't immediately comply with their assessment of guilt. We will be seeing that Paul doesn't play their game. So, first, Paul pleads not guilty.

Second, notice Paul's Spirit-given boldness. This court of seventy of the most powerful men in the nation could be quite an intimidating body. They had your life in their hands. Many people crumbled into total

compliance simply by being ushered into their presence. But Paul looks them in the eye and does not flinch. What gives him this boldness? I believe it is the Spirit of God. Martin Luther almost caved in the first time he was faced with a similar body of men, but after a night of prayer God strengthened him and enabled him to boldly stand firm. It was a supernatural strength that came from God.

And I have seen God give a similar boldness to people who have been arraigned before modern courts. I read the transcript of one court case in which a prolife picketer was being arraigned, and I stood amazed at the power, passion, clarity and conviction with which this person spoke from the Scriptures about the responsibilities of the court to protect the innocent. And later on he said that he was not ordinarily able to do that, but that God's Spirit gave him a strange peace, boldness and compassion as he spoke. It was almost as if the Spirit was giving him an unction to speak just the words that were needed. It brought many people to tears. I was moved to tears as I read that. Actually, I was looking for that yesterday because I wanted to read some of it to you, but I couldn't find it.

And we saw in Acts 2 that this same boldness can come to anyone submitted to God's will. The Gospel of Luke ends with fearful disciples who are in hiding. Acts shows how Pentecost transformed them into a state of boldness. When they are yet again filled with the Spirit in Acts 4 it says that they spoke the Word of God with boldness. Any time the Spirit of God comes upon us He gives us a supernatural boldness. And God has given the same boldness to countless men, women and children down through the intervening years. Boldness is not just a gift for the apostles. It is a gift for every Spirit-filled Christian. Read Foxe's book of Martyr's some time and you will see testimonies of young girls facing the lions or torture yet speaking with supernatural conviction, boldness and compassion.

I want to be showing today and next week how everything Paul says in these first ten verses is Spirit inspired, and is not the fleshly maneuvering of a politician (as some people think). Last week I made a comment about Paul making a mistake in this chapter. Actually, I was mistaken. Jesus commends Paul in verse 11, and in the next chapter Paul insists that he did nothing wrong, and I realized when I looked at the Greek that Paul was not apologizing in verse 5. He is testifying against a corrupt system.

II. Ananias depraved response (v. 2)

Let's look at the corrupt Ananias in verse 2. **“And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the**

mouth.” This was such a gross violation of Biblical law that Paul instantly rebukes Ananias. Deuteronomy 25 did not allow any punishment of people prior to a trial. And I sent out an email last week that outlined numerous Scriptures that would agree with Paul that this was a violation of the law. And for those of you who did not get that, you can download last week’s sermon from the web. The information is in a footnote. To slap Paul in response to his simple assertion of innocence was to assume his guilt without a trial.

But that was nothing new for Ananias. All Israel knew him as a despicable tyrant. Let me give a bit of background on this guy that will help you to understand verse 5. He ruled as high priest from 48-59 AD. But you need to realize that Biblically qualified men no longer filled the office of high priest. This had become a political office instead of a church office. This office was appointed to corrupt men by Rome and Ananias gained the office through political intrigue. Though Ananias had control of the temple, his position was secular, and the conservative Jews such as Pharisees utterly despised him. Ananias was a ruthless man who assassinated political opponents, and when that was not possible, sought to buy them off with temple money. For example, he did everything he could to get rid of Josephus. He robbed priests of their tithes and used it for his own political gain. He almost lost his office from Rome when he slaughtered a large number of Samaritans. But he had political connections and he got off the hook. He had no problem with taking out his critics. Ananias was a man who was evil to the core. And he was not a man who was used to being challenged. When Paul did not meekly submit to this kangaroo court, he was incensed. And his command to slap Paul on the mouth was totally in character with what we know about Ananias. As far as Ananias was concerned, his word was law, and people better follow it. He had determined Paul guilty, and that was the end of the matter. He had no intention of having to prove Paul’s guilt. This is the way he worked.

Unfortunately this is the modus operandi of at least a few of the unelected, unaccountable Federal agencies like OSHA or the EPA. If a business gets on the wrong side of those agencies it can cost them thousands to millions of dollars with very little recourse. They are treated as guilty until proven innocent. And it’s hard to prove your innocence. Some businesses just find it easier to pay the fine as a bribe to get them off their back. Our city has been handed down an unfunded mandate from on high about the city sewer separation, and what they are requiring will cost billions of dollars. Watch your taxes go up. I’ve talked to two politicians in the city

who have said that to fight it would be futile and would just cost the taxpayer more dollars. And they are probably right. This was the state of affairs of politics in Paul's day. They didn't have OSHA, EPA, OSHRC,¹ FEMA, ATF, ATSDR,² DOL, USDA, EEOC,³ CPSC,⁴ NRCS,⁵ and dozens of other agencies to contend with, but when you read Josephus you realize that businessmen suffered just as surely then as they do today under these agencies. In any case, I just wanted to give you a little feel for what was going on with Ananias so that we can understand Paul's response.

III. Paul's prophetic rebuke (v. 3)

In verse 3 Paul let's loose with what I consider to be a prophet rebuke. **“Then Paul said to him, ‘God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?’”** And God did indeed strike Ananias down within a few short years. Jews who couldn't stand him anymore cornered him in an aqueduct and brutally killed him as he had brutally killed so many others. So I (along with a number of commentators) consider this to be a prophetic rebuke that was fulfilled. Paul is speaking as a prophet. Jesus had told the apostles that they didn't have to plan ahead of time what to speak because the Spirit would give them just the right words to speak. And here is the Spirit's fulfillment.

But there are a lot of people who struggle with what Paul said here. Their interpretation is that Paul was operating in the flesh, and their proof that this was fleshly and wrong is that Paul apologizes in verse 5. Last week I actually thought Paul was apologizing in verse 5 as well. But I have since been convinced that this is not the case at all. I'll deal with the arguments for that when we get to verse 5, but for now let me just make four observations about verse 3:

First, Ananias was worthy of being struck by God for violating his pledge to uphold the law. Right out of the chute, as soon as he was appointed as high priest, Ananias started violating his oath of office. The church needs to come into agreement with Paul that the gross violations of our Constitutional liberties are worthy of God's judgment. Until we can agree on that, there is very little progress in regaining liberties in our nation. Every

¹ Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

² Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

³ Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

⁴ Consumer Public Safety Commission.

⁵ Natural Resources Conservation Service.

congressman, senator and president of the United States takes an oath of office with a “So help me God,” that he will uphold and defend the Constitution against all enemies. Yet right out of the chute many of them are violating the Constitution left and right. They are just as deserving of God’s judgment. The same is true of liberal pastors who have taken a vow that they believe the Westminster Confession and yet are lying through their teeth. God will hold them accountable.

But the second thing I want you to notice balances this point out. I want you to notice that Paul did not do the striking, nor was he calling the church to do the striking. He is not calling the nation to arms. This is not revolution. This is seeking *God’s* judgment upon a particularly bad public official. And though we are not inspired prophets like Paul was, God has given us a whole bunch of imprecatory psalms to ask for God’s judgment. Psalms like Psalm 58. In fact, why don’t we read that together corporately right now?

Psalms 58:1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones?

Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?

Psalms 58:2 No, in heart you work wickedness;

You weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.

Psalms 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb;

They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

Psalms 58:4 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent;

They are like the deaf cobra *that* stops its ear,

Psalms 58:5 Which will not heed the voice of charmers,

Charming ever so skillfully.

Psalms 58:6 Break their teeth in their mouth, O God!

Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!

Psalms 58:7 Let them flow away as waters *which* run continually;

When he bends *his* bow,

Let his arrows be as if cut in pieces.

Psalms 58:8 *Let them be* like a snail which melts away as it goes,

Like a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

Psalms 58:9 Before your pots can feel *the burning* thorns,

He shall take them away as with a whirlwind,

As in His living and burning wrath.

Psalms 58:10 The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance;

He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,

Psalms 58:11 So that men will say,

“Surely *there is* a reward for the righteous;

Surely He is God who judges in the earth.”

The thing I like about the imprecatory Psalms is that they keep us from making mistakes. When we pray them, we are simply coming into

agreement with Christ's prayers. They are Christ's prayers. He inspired them, and we are simply saying "Amen" to them when we pray them. And He can fulfill those prayers by either taking them out or by converting them and having Jesus bear their curse. So even though we are not inspired as Paul was, God has given us inspired prayers that we can say "Amen" to. And the Father knows how to answer them in ways that will glorify His name.

The third thing to notice is that Ananias is compared to a whitewashed wall. Commentators point out that this was a well-known Jewish metaphor taken from Ezekiel 13:10-16. It refers to a tottering wall in which the cement that was holding it together was crumbling, and rather than fixing it, people paint it over with whitewash to make it look good. The idea is that the wall will never hold up to judgment. It is tottering and guaranteed to collapse. And this is the way it is with our modern tower of Babel. Kathy shared her devotions with me the other day that illustrates this so well. Habakkuk 2 gives the famous verse that says, "**For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.**" But the verse right before speaks of the evil that has to be removed before that can happen. And it says, "**Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the peoples labor to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain?**" It's a picture of pagans desperately working hard for their own agendas, little realizing that it will all fall apart, and that they are really feeding the fires of their own destruction. That's what's happening in DC. They are feeding the fires of their own collapse. Just as Ananias would soon collapse as a tottering whitewashed wall, so too will all who stand in opposition to God.

The fourth thing to notice is what the whitewash is covering up. Ananias is pretending to be an enforcer of law when in reality he is a breaker and abuser of the law. How many times must DC violate the laws of our nation before people wake up to realize that their status of defenders of law is an illusion. It is whitewash over top of Constitutional treason.

No wonder Paul gets angry over Ananias's actions. There is a place for godly anger when government becomes as corrupt as Ananias had. Jesus was angry with the Pharisees and Sadducees. He was very angry. So was John the Baptist. It's not wrong to get angry over treason.

IV. The court's irresponsible inaction (v. 4)

But point IV asserts that it was not just Ananias that was at fault. Certainly he was the most visible evil man. Certainly he was the one everyone knew was a greedy, self-serving, pork-barrel-thieving government

official. Everyone knew it. But I blame the people in verse 4 just as much: **“And those who stood by said, ‘Do you revile God’s high priest?’”** They are shocked at the degree of outrage that Paul has shown. They are used to being patient with evil. Notice that there is not one word of criticism for Ananias’ lawbreaking even though everyone there knew that what he did was unlawful. All they can think about is, “How dare anyone speak against Ananias? How dare anyone criticize the government?” *They weren’t going to do it. They didn’t want to be on Ananias’s blacklist.*

But there is a further group of people that I blame who are only implied in these verses. It is the majority of men in that room who simply kept quiet. We know that many of them didn’t like Ananias any more than Paul did. The Pharisaic faction definitely didn’t like Ananias. But they kept quiet. That’s the problem. They kept quiet. It takes a further word from Paul in verse 6 that proves that *they are personally under attack by Ananias* before they are spurred into action. And this is the way it is with many today. Our judges, congressmen and presidents have perpetrated treason after treason over my past lifetime. And I don’t use the word “treason” lightly. All of our founding fathers would have called the deliberate violations of the Constitution that happen routinely today, “treason.” And yet treason happens today and the majority has remained patiently silent. We know that many don’t like it, but they have remained silent. It may take a few more outrageous acts from the Obama administration *that they feel personal loss over* before all hell breaks loose as it did in verse 10. We don’t know what the last straw is going to be that will make public officials start to get fighting mad. There are ten states that look like they have had enough of unconstitutional Federal mandates. But it’s not enough to get mad only in verse 10 when things hurt the politicians *personally*. They should have been mad in verse 3 over principle just as Paul was. The verse-3-time-to-get-mad was many decades ago. Think of the many years of silence that has allowed the Ananiases of our culture to keep doing what they do. Many silences are guilty silences. There really are three evils in this passage: 1) the evil of an Ananias who breaks his oath, 2) the public officials who verbally defend him, and 3) the silent officials and citizens who put up with it until it is almost too late. They are all guilty.

V. Paul's Incisive rejection of Ananias's authority (v. 5 – Greek = past *and* present – I still don't recognize him as high priest.)

Let's move on to point V and look at Paul's incisive rejection of Ananias' authority. **"Then Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"** As I mentioned, last week I thought this was an apology. And then I read J.A. Alexander's three pages of numerous reasons why this could not possibly be an apology, and he changed my mind.

First of all the Greek has an unusual construction using both a past tense and a present tense. It's hard to translate into English. Alexander and another commentary translate it this way: "I did not know (and I do not now know) that he is the High Priest." That's the emphasis of the Greek – "I did not know (and I still do not know) that he is the High Priest." In other words, I did not recognize him as High Priest when I made my statement and I still don't recognize him as High Priest. He is an imposter. He is a usurper to the title.

But then the question comes, "If that is the case, why does Paul then quote Exodus 22:28? What would be the point?" And the answer is simple. He was explaining why he had in no way violated Exodus 22:28 (as had been assumed). Ananias is claiming to be the High Priest, and the High Priest was not supposed to be a ruler of the people. The *king* was to be a ruler of the people, not the High Priest. The High Priest had no business ruling. He had no business doing what Ananias and priests before him were doing. Only Jesus was a prophet, priest and king. In the Old Testament there was a complete separation of powers, and godly men reacted exactly the way Paul did any time that separation of powers was violated. Both times kings tried to be priests in the Old Testament the people reacted against it, drove the king out of the temple, and God judged the kings with leprosy. Likewise any priest who tried to be a ruler was violating his office. 2Chronicles 19:11 says, **"Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah."** So you have the priest and you have the ruler. They are two separate offices over church and state. In Joshua 17:4; 22:30; and 22:32 the chief priest was contrasted with the rulers.

What Paul is rejecting is the idea that a legitimate high priest could be taken away by Rome and another put in his place by Rome. Yet this is what Rome had been doing for a long time. Let's try to use a modern analogy. It

would be like the civil government taking me out of office and putting a pro-abortion, pro-homosexual pastor who denied the inerrancy of the Scripture into the pulpit here. Do you think that you would meekly submit to that man's preaching simply because he was appointed by a civil magistrate and he called himself a ruler? No. It would be unbiblical and unconstitutional. Paul spoke respectfully to true kings and true rulers, but he was not willing to speak respectfully to this foul man. So with that, let me read it again with emphasis and see if you can catch the drift. "Brethren, I did not know (and I do not now know) that he is the High Priest. For it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a *ruler* of your people.'" This high priest is not legitimate, and for sure the high priest is not the ruler of the people.

To those who object to this interpretation, there is an insuperable problem that no commentary that takes this as an apology has been able to explain. In fact, some of the apology proponents say that we may never know the explanation. The apology interpretation has to take Paul's statement, "I did not know" as a lack of information about the fact that a high priest was talking to him. Paul served on the Sanhedrin in his pre-Christ days for years, and he knew who moderated; he knew where they stood. And since Paul has been in Jerusalem twice since Ananias took office, and since everyone was talking about the horrible abuses that Ananias was engaging in, it is virtually impossible to believe that Paul did not know that Ananias was in office. And even the "apology interpretation" people recognize that this is true. So he knows that the high priest moderates, and he knows who this high priest is.

Some have tried to explain that Paul's eyesight was so bad that he couldn't see a few feet in front of him. That is lame and does not fit the evidence of Paul's being able to recognize others at a distance. Others say that maybe people were blocking Paul's view from Ananias. But that is lame. Paul knew where the sound of the voice was coming from. And secondly, he would know from his experience on the Sanhedrin who is the moderator. He knows who would be leading this trial. And no one else would have spoken for the assembly in that way. Others say that Paul was lying; that he really did know, but he was trying to get out of a fix here. But in chapter 24:19-21 Paul denies that he had said anything wrong, unless someone wanted to object to his crying out, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day." So he is clearly saying that he did not say anything wrong in verse 3. You can study the debate in Alexander's commentary, but I am convinced that the apology interpretation simply will not work. Instead, Paul was first *defending* his previous

statement, second refusing to recognize the legality of Ananias' High Priesthood, and third insisting that he never violated Exodus 22:28 since he had not spoken that against a *ruler* of the people. That's not merely a technicality – that's the heart of Exodus 22:28.

Let's apply this. There does come a time when people must refuse to recognize the legitimacy of certain offices. Ananias was supposed to be a churchman. We don't have High Priests today, but let's just use an analogy. Let's pretend that we are members of a denomination in which the moderator of the General Assembly has authorized the killing of babies in abortions just as Ananias had killed adults. (We know denominations that have done this, right?) Furthermore, this moderator has pushed ungodly agendas on the denomination, has thugs who intimidate his opponents, and has rejected the authority of the Bible, just like Ananias did. Let's also suppose that this moderator was just like the Sadducees in being a liberal who denied miracles, angels, a resurrection or any other miracle. It almost sounds just like the moderator of the PCUSA, with the exception that he doesn't pretend to be a government official. Would it be credible to say that you must stay in the denomination and respect this man's authority? No. Just as Paul pulled out of the Jewish synagogue system when it became corrupt, Christians are obligated to leave liberal denominations like the PCUSA. And that's what Paul called all Jews to do. Just a few months before Paul had said, “**Come out from among them and be separate,' says the Lord**” (2 Cor. 6:17). Within four years the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation and told believing Jews the same thing. He said, “**Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues**” (Rev. 18:4). Paul was no longer recognizing the authority of this apostate church leader. And I would say that denominations like the PCUSA, the Methodist Church and other liberal denominations that have denied the Gospel at the highest levels, have financed murderous Marxist guerilla warfare in Africa, have supported and celebrated abortion and homosexuality, and have even financed conferences where goddess worship occurred, are not worthy of the title of Christian. They are apostate and should no more receive our apologies or our acknowledgment than Paul was willing to honor Ananias. To stay in such a denomination is to reject the kingship of the heavenly king, prophet and High Priest, Jesus Christ.

VI. The heart of Paul's defense (v. 6) [To be continued next time]

This is why Paul immediately jumps to the heart of his defense in verse 6. “**But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the**

other part Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’” It really was an issue of liberalism. The Sadducees denied the possibility of a resurrection and the Pharisees affirmed it. On this one point, Paul was still a Pharisee in his interpretation.

Some scholars think Paul is being coy or sly here. Not at all. He was indeed pitting Sadducees against Pharisees as a tactic, but he wasn’t telling a lie. At every defense in this book he appeals to the resurrection. The resurrection is the heart of our faith. And, Lord willing, we will look at why the resurrection is such a central doctrine next Sunday.

But for today I want to remind you of something Paul had said just a few months before. He said that if the resurrection is true, then our labors in the Lord are not in vain. He ends His great chapter on the resurrection by saying, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** Paul could say that even though Corinth was filled with problems. His labors in the Lord were not in vain. He could say that even though he had recently been beaten by officers, mistreated by courts and stoned by mobs. He could say that even though things were as dark for Paul as they may appear to be for us in Obamanation.

For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus gave Him boldness, comfort, hope, faith and zeal. We will see that the resurrection of Jesus makes it worthwhile to oppose tyranny in the land. Why? Because Christ’s resurrection guarantees that He will win in history and that our labors in the Lord are not in vain. Amen? We do not need to give up hope. And if Christ has been raised as King of kings and Lord of lords, then this doctrine prevents us from believing in anarchy. If anarchy were true, there would be no kings for Jesus to presently rule. The doctrine of the resurrection prevents us from lashing out with revolution. Why? Because Christ will achieve His victory with the sword of the Word, not the sword of revolution. Christ’s resurrection will give us the boldness to not back down in the face of intimidation? Why? Because we know we have the Lord of the universe behind us. But it will also give us the wisdom to not take things into our own hands, knowing that the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds... (2Cor. 10:4).

Conclusion

So even though this passage describes the tyranny of our court system rather well, as well as the liberalism of some churches, it makes our focus on Jesus Christ who is greater than all that. Amen? It gives us hope. And that is my exhortation to you this morning. Do not lose hope no matter how many Ananiases may arise in our nation. Like Paul, **“be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** Amen.

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